

Pregnancy of Unknown Location (PUL)

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What is a Pregnancy of Unknown Location (PUL)?

PUL is used to describe cases where there is a positive pregnancy test but no sign of a pregnancy inside or outside the uterus (womb), either on an ultrasound scan or on a laparoscopy (keyhole camera surgery).

Why is it called PUL?

There are three possibilities:

You may be very early into the pregnancy. Your pregnancy may be developing normally, and in the correct place, but it is too small to be seen on an ultrasound scan.

It is normal not to have clarity on a scan before 6 weeks.

You may have had a miscarriage. You may have had some bleeding and lost the pregnancy prior to attending the clinic. A pregnancy test can stay positive for up to two weeks following a miscarriage until the hormones completely settle down. A 'complete' miscarriage cannot be presumed until other possibilities, eg. ectopic pregnancy, have been excluded.

You may have an ectopic pregnancy. An ectopic pregnancy is a pregnancy that is developing outside of the womb, typically in the fallopian tube. Ectopic pregnancies are often too small to be seen on a scan. Unfortunately, a pregnancy cannot survive in this situation. This is because as the foetus gets bigger it can run out of space to grow and rupture the fallopian tube, causing severe pain and internal bleeding.

What can help the doctor to give you an answer?

There are a number of things that may help the doctor to give you an answer:

Consultation and examination – You will be asked about your medical history and current symptoms. The doctor may examine your abdomen and may also do a vaginal (internal) examination.

Blood tests – Blood will be taken to establish the level of human chorionic gonadotrophin (hCG) and progesterone (both pregnancy hormones) in the bloodstream. We will contact you with the results.

You may need a repeat scan.

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